

Produce Marketing Association

PMA welcomes House, Senate bills seeking to address FDA's food safety oversight

Newark, Del. – Produce Marketing Association (PMA) today welcomed news of introduction of two congressional bills that would address Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversight of food safety, the House of Representatives' Safe Food Enforcement, Assessment, Standards and Targeting (FEAST) Act of 2009 and the Senate's FDA Food Safety Modernization Act.

"PMA and our members are committed to providing safe and wholesome fresh fruits and vegetables, an essential weapon against obesity and chronic disease as well as a tasty component of a healthful, balanced diet," said PMA Vice President of Government Relations and Public Affairs Kathy Means. "Reps. Jim Costa and Adam Putnam, Sens. Richard Durbin, Judd Gregg, Ted Kennedy and Richard Burr should be commended for their leadership on this issue."

The House's aptly-named Safe FEAST Act would give FDA authority to set commodity-specific standards for the safe production, harvesting and packaging of fruits and vegetables, and require FDA to prioritize its inspections resources based on risk. The bill would also require domestic facilities to conduct risk-based hazard analysis then implement preventive controls to minimize identified hazards, and to maintain related documentation. It would also give FDA authority to detain or recall suspect foods if firms don't voluntarily do so, would grant the agency greater access to records of suspect companies, and would require several agencies to work together to develop a national agricultural and food defense strategy. FDA would also issue biennial guidance on the most significant foodborne contaminants.

The House bill is expected to be introduced March 5 by Reps. Costa (D-20th, Calif.) and Putnam (R-12th, Fla.). The similar Senate bill was introduced March 3 by Durbin (D-Ill.), Gregg (R-N.H.), Kennedy (D-Mass.), Burr (R-N.C.) as well as Sens. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.).

"Recent regulatory problems have diminished public confidence in our government's oversight of food safety, and we support legislation that assists FDA's own efforts to adapt the regulatory system to today's marketplace and public health complexities," said PMA Chief Science Officer Dr. Robert "Bob" Whitaker. "Most importantly, PMA commends legislative efforts that are consistent with the ongoing and rigorous efforts to enhance food safety already under way throughout the supply chain for produce."

Means and Whitaker noted that PMA looks forward to working with the authors of both bills as they move forward, to achieve the produce industry's needs.

About Produce Marketing Association (PMA)

Founded in 1949, the Produce Marketing Association is the leading trade association representing nearly 3,000 companies from every segment of the global produce and floral supply chain. Members rely on PMA year round for the business solutions they need to increase sales and consumption, build strong professional relationships, and expand their business opportunities. For more information, visit www.pma.com.